

Pandanus, Pattern and Design

Treasure the Plaiting in Terengganu

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Abstract

Pandanus plaiting is a handicraft that has been invoked by the world community since a long time ago. However, plaiting usage among the society during this time is very dwindling. It happens following the changing of century which moves as fast as with science and technology development which is increasingly expanding from day to day. Knowledge about plaiting among Malaysian community also influences the demand of plaiting which is worrying. Worry concerning this heritage needs to be overcome by thinking and carrying out activities that can protect plaiting from extinction. What worries most is not only related to demand on craft plaiting but more to know on plaiting as heritage that need, to be appreciated by every strata of society.

Keywords

Pandanus; Pattern; Design; Plaiting; Terengganu

Introduction

The art of plaiting is one of the traditional Malay Handicraft which is operated by most women and single mother. In the past, plaiting was used as household items for daily use and as their past time activity. Malay in the past was known to perform activities related to entrepreneurship in the production of commercial craft. That means it is not only carried out for daily use and leisure only, but it is one of the activities undertaken by commercial enterprise until now. The history of plaiting is also believed to have been started during the Neolithic age in parallel with the development of art pottery that was popular during that time.

The purpose of plaiting is to produce a mat product by applying cross media production. Plaiting process is one activity which is time consuming and some plaiting is complicated to prepare. The process also requires determination and patience, which is highly necessary in the production of a type of plaiting. Without persistence, perseverance plaiting activity cannot be done because it depends on each medium used in the process and surrounding area. Plaiting activities also require high expertise because the

workers need to have convergence and accuracy in the production of any equipment or products based on the type of plaiting to be produced. Any plaiting designed with unique and creative will help society maintain the original Malay culture.

Traditional Malay handicraft should be publicized to the young generation as early as primary scholars to educate them on our Malay heritage. Creating awareness among new generation will ensure their understanding and appreciation of local traditional handicrafts. This problem proved to be critical as the local plaiting art is moving towards extinction if there is no action taken to preserve it. Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGO) are suggested to defend traditional art craft by engaging art experts in various fields to educate young generation. If there is no preventive action taken, local art craft will be lost. In order to develop art and craft appreciation to nurtured in young generation. It is important for us to keep the traditional arts from extinct because it is so valuable and priceless to our new generation. In Art and Craft, it proves to be challenging to find skilled artisan in each of the respective arts to teach their skills to younger generation in order to preserve the plaiting heritage. Without efforts of reviving the Malaysia traditional craft, it would not exist and new generation doesn't know about it in future (Pertubuhan Berita Nasional Malaysia, 2006).

The objectives and scope of the research are explained as below:

- Aim and Objective

The aim of this research is to investigate the pattern and plaiting design in Terengganu. The objective of this research to identify design are produced in pandanus plaiting. Second to know the product design and third to identify the types of traditional and current pattern.

- Scope of the Research

The scope of this research is focused on pandanus

plaiting. Besides that The research will emphasize on the pattern and design in pandanus plaiting. It will also be analyzed through the findings that had been obtained from observation, interview and samples.

Literature Review

The art of plaiting is something that cannot be detached from the traditional ways of life in Nusantara communities. The plaiting can be seen everywhere from the mat to home and office decoration. This art is considered as a heritage craft that needs to be supported not just for its esthetical value but also for its substantial contribution for the socio-economic development in the industry. It first started as a cottage industry and these traditional art skills used a lot of forest materials which could be developed into a bigger industry. The art of traditional skills has grown into one of the art communities to help the village improve family economic resources. Art is also identified as the unique culture of the Malay society. It also reflects the village community of creative thinkers in the production of design patterns using natural colour (Melati, 2010).

Therefore, the love for art and craft should be inculcated among the young generation as to gain interest in the craft and art traditional. Strong strategies and programs should be implemented to ensure continuous preservation in craft and traditional art. This is because in the technologies era, the mat plaited in Malaysia will lose their perseverance traits and skills as plaiting mat of plastic is more readily available than plait mats and hats they had been since they were young. They had also learned the fundamentals process of preparation of plaiting before producing any types of plaiting. Plaiting process also requires patience and persistence of high and relatively trivial. This is one of the reasons many young people nowadays are not interested and refuse to learn how to plait pandanus plaiting (Raja Luvena, 2006).

Pandanus is a plant that derives from the monocots known to be of 600 species. It is found in Malaysia and other tropical climate countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Philippine. It is also found in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, India, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Island including Melanesia consisting of Micronesia and Polynesia (Lex.A.J.Thomson, L. E., & Elevitch, G. R., 2006). The pandanus also known as pandanus utile or corkscrew palm by the international

community even though it is not of the palm family found in the pacific islands in the coastal areas and in many parts of South Asia like Malaysia, Indonesia, Northern Australia and the Southern part of Upolu, Samoa. Pandanus of this type could reach the height of 20 meters from sea level and some even 60 meters full grown. Coastal line of light coloured sand with heavy soil is favoured by the pandanus to flourish. They help in the ecologic system as protection from erosion, wind breaker and coastal protection. It also plant in home garden. The leaves used in plaiting activities could also act as roof of a building while the fruit is edible. In Hawaii much of them are planted within the hotel vicinity as a tribute to those who use pandanus in their traditional creative art of plaiting. The pandanus suited well as home garden and some even as roadside decoration.



FIG. 1 PANDAN TREE GROW ABOVE HILLY TERRAIN IN SEASHORE

Terengganu is located near the southern china ocean which pandanus trees are easily found along the beaches. Its can be found along the coast of Terengganu acting as anti erosion agent and to shield the harsh monsoon wind during the rainy season. The quality of pandanus leaf will be adopted by plaiter to be mat plaiting to use in various types of production. However all plaiter also produces various types of uniqueness plaiting pattern. The pattern created in craft arts and textile is based on repeatedly printed motif adheres to aspects such as lines, form spaces and colours.

Patterns can also be widely seen in our surroundings, either on living beings or man-made objects like on the walls, items of use or simply any other existing things on this planet. Other than the natural patterns, most of us can also appreciate looking at wonderfully arranged patterns on the beach sands, leaves scattering around on the ground and also the cosmic stars shining on the pitch black sky. It consistently changes in various sizes and shades of colours as well as potentially delivering some hidden meanings, ready for us to decipher. Most patterns are responsible

as adornment and decorative aspects which are both eye-pleasing and can bond the relationship between religion and culture.



FIG. 2 STRIPE PLAIT WHICH ARE LIKE TRIANGLE PATTERN AT ONCE AND NOWADAYS WHICH SHOWED TRIANGULAR PLAIT THAT CALLED *PUCUK REBUNG*.

The above plaiting shows traditional pattern in mat plaitings which still very much used in the present time even though it is a pattern originated from the Stone Age. This pucuk rebung pattern which is divided into two types has been adopted as the motif for mat plaiting and songket which always been the prime choice of plaiters. According to Rumliah Awang, pucuk rebung motif has been the compulsory motif for every types of Malay kelarai. Therefore, it is not surprising for most of Malay plaiting to have the pucuk rebung motif in it. It can also be seen in various products of bamboo and rattan plaitings and such which also utilize this motif as the main motif. The same goes to the process of producing mats which were made by plaiting the pandanus leaves in which the majority of the kelarai produced surely utilize pucuk rebung motif as the main motif.

History has proven that pattern works as an agent of symbols which is interpretable as motif with colours and forms, also functioning to deliver implied and clearly-stated messages through the motif produced. Colle (2003) claimed that pattern is a decoration found on the design termed motif and from the motif, there exists patterns out of the motif rotation process that has been done. She further added that the main thing to remember is that in the design, the lines play an important role as it is done in repetition along the fact that the pattern is arranged on the surface neatly and followed a balanced composition and fixed colours, arrangements and scales. It should be asserted here that a good pattern must contain some symmetrical lines and it has a pattern structure which stays on the right position and condition, to fit with the required production, either in terms of size or width.

Pattern can be obtained out of the repetition process, where it can be seen from the activity of arranging a design done in bulk or full, which will altogether form a complete design. The repetition of motif that will produce a complete design of the all over pattern is possible, only by looking at the whole design, as explained previously. Pattern and motif are composed from the decorative items elements from complicated shapes to much easier ones, referring to the relationship between the use of line, value, texture or colour. As a whole, it is introduced from natural objects and altered by man for the simplification of the design in question. From the production of the design, observers will see the elements such as the shape and pattern, even though functions as the arrangement of important objects, simply to produce interesting-looking designs. The design is substantial, as it exists through the outcome of the repetition concept. From the element perspective, the pattern is seen as something being arranged following the preference and idea birthed from the designer's own creativity to translate it into the motif form. Pattern and motif are composed from the arrangement which starts from a simple sign, to become a close relationship between one another like the more complex line, shape, value, texture and colour. This is because the motif and pattern do not work independently but are closely working with other surrounding elements Otto G. Ocvirk, R. E., & Cayton, D. L. (2009).



FIG. 3 THE EXAMPLES ABOVE ARE CALLED ALL OVER DESIGN

Design is something that is very broad to be discussed especially it does not limit to a particular thing, yet it cover all things in this world, be it a natural thing or one that is created by man. This reflects that design really closely related to human and the environment which could fulfil and complement the needs and desires of human being who always seek for perfection. All observable things whether attractive or not are still classified as design. Design is also needed in the everyday life of human being as an agent which

could facilitate them in solving any particular problem besides giving them comfort and convenience.

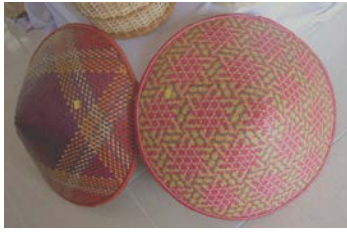


FIG. 4 EXAMPLES OF FOOD COVER ARE USE IN MALAY SOCIETY (TO KEEP FOOD UNHARMED)

Design cannot move on its own without the help from other thing such as motifs and patterns. Therefore, design is interdependent with things that surround it in making something that is useful to human being. It could also benefit living things available in this world be it animals or insects. Design has been identified as two-way communication tool which serves as something that has the ability to know and assist human being in every related problems. Design is also known as a tool or a composition which act as planning tool in a particular work of two or three dimensional shape. It is one of the elements that is formal in nature which will be applied in arts with the exploitation of space, colors, values and accompanied by the elements which are parts of the element of design.

Design can also be identified as the organisation of materials and processes which is the most productive to the mankind besides having a certain functions. It is also the integration to the technological, social, and economical needs apart from fulfilling the biological needs and the pshycological effect of materials, shapes, colors and space in the human thought. Design itself is divided into various forms which are related to the everyday life of human being such as in the fashion design, fabric, graphic etc. The definition of design is too universal in which it could be resulted from the thoughts human mind. From definition given by dictionary, design defines something that exists in the discipline of arts whether in the form of plaiting, textiles etc. It is also important in the planning of related thing by using all the principles of design. Design also establishes concepts or ideas to patterns, drawings or a model of something which function to help human in creating new things. Indirectly, half of the production that can be found in this world which is being utilized or made just for decoration purposes involves the results of designing. Besides that, design is also known as something that empowers mankind in planning and realizing a particular product which

can help to achieve the objective of a particular person. Design aslo act as something that facilitates mankind by identifying any problem they encountered and solving it by implementing something to overcome the problem (Cermayeff, 2011).

Sample Image to Study

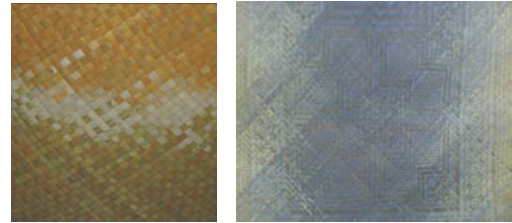


FIG. 5 CURRENT DESIGN CAN BE SEEN IN PLAITING WHICH USES TONE COLOUR

The above example shows two common types of plait mats. Both of them have been renewed in the use of background color that was originally using one or two colors on the blades plait sheets or no use of color directly on a plait mat. However, as time goes by, a lot of ordinary mats have been used as a seat liner and the goods have been transformed into an exclusive beautiful mat. To get the type of leave blades with the color tone, the blade should be dyed and plaited carefully to get the perfect color tone as planned. There is also a type of plaiting that uses a color tone that is not dyed.



FIG. 6 EXAMPLE OF PLAITING WHICH USES TONE COLOURED PANDANUS

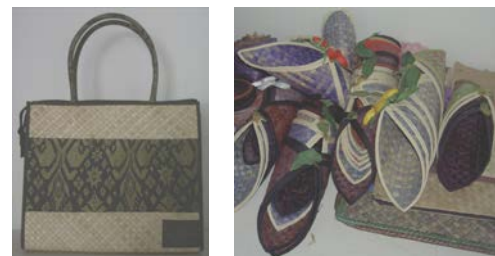


FIG. 7 PLAITING COMBINATION WITH ANOTHER MATERIALS LIKE SONGKET

The above toned plaiting shows the sample of plaiting used for the production of everyday items, other than household decorative pieces like pillow covers. The use of harmonious colour tones with a variety of colours on the cushion plaiting has become the latest,

most eye-catching and unique technique. The suitable colour arrangement for the *elephant head motif* produced also influences the items made making them more unique.

Methodology

The methodology is implemented on qualitative method. Every information are getting from the research is collected and used the method are choosen related types of research are doing.

● Primary Data

Interview has been conducted on selected plaiting plaiters in obtaining information related to the plaiting pattern. Obsevation and data collection was also carried out on the design and products of pandanus plaiting.

● Secondary Data

To support the information acquired from primary data, the facts from both sources has been obtained from the printed information such as books, journals, encyclopaedia, newspaper and magazines. Previous research are utilized for references. Through articles related to research associated with pandanus plaiting.

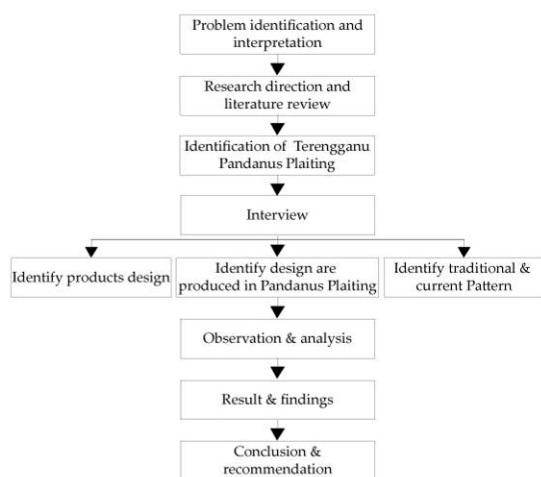


FIG. 8 FLOW CHART OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Result and Discussion

The expected outcome of this research hoped that all the information and the facts from the research can give useful guidelines and benefits for future researches, handicraft centres and also the public. From the research, more accurate facts are figured on the design in plaiting from Terengganu. Plus, the distinctive features of the pattern and name that can be identified. From the precise data of the research,

people appreciated the unique pattern and design from Terengganu that may lead to various expressions which explained the uniqueness of handicraft from Malaysia.

The various types of pattern and design can be exposed to the younger generations so that they can understand and know the patterns and design plaiting in Malaysia. With this kind of awareness, plaiting and Malay heritage will be more appreciated by our younger generations. Furthermore, the younger generations may also have a better understanding on the art of plaiting in which most of them are inspired by nature and surrounding. Therefore, it may produce generations that are more creative thinking and able to appreciate the ancestor's handicrafts' aesthetical value.

The vital part is the hope that all the information attained in the research can be documented properly so it can become a fine, relevant reference to the public. This initial approach is important for the younger generation to ensure they will continuously protect the ancestor's heritage until it is known to the entire world.

Conclusions

Plaiting is an invaluable legacy that should be appreciated by everyone from every level of the society, irrespective of skin colour, age, religion and race. It is responsible for introducing the custom and culture of a nation's race through the beauty observed on those delicate masterpieces. Something that is undeniably cannot be valued using money in the world. This is due to the fact that the handicraft is a prized knowledge that can only be inherited by means of learning it only from those who have mastered the skill. However, without sheer effort, one cannot simply attain such knowledge, as producing each and every craft necessitates tremendous effort other than mental strength, given the fact that its production is not an occupation which promises high revenues. As the outcome of the research that has been conducted, several conclusions in various aspects, with regards to plaiting can be derived.

It has been noted that various initiatives have been done by the government to attract the attention of the nation's youth to involve themselves with plaiting activities. In spite of this, the response has not been welcoming although the government has come up with some financial allocations to give to those who learn plaiting within the time stipulated. This further demonstrates that the government has really taken this endeavour seriously. Yet it has proven to be

ineffective despite the fact that financial assistance is underway. Therefore, careful planning must be implemented so that the plaiting activity may be able to be pursued amongst the younger generation, and consequently further avoid such activities from being slowly forgotten.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wish to thank Research Management Institute (RMI), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia for the support of this research.

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Noor Hafiza Ismail was born in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, in 1983. She received the Diploma in art & design (textile design) from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Kelantan, Malaysia, in 2004, the B.S. degree in Industrial

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She started working as a young lecturer in *Yayasan Terengganu* College for a year. Since 2008, she has been a lecturer in Universiti Teknologi MARA Kuala Terengganu until now. Her research area is textile and Malay culture.

She was awarded silver medal for her research Tapioca Starch as Colour in Batik Design in International Innovation, Design and Articulation (i-IDEA13) at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perlis, Malaysia and gold medal for Commercialization of New Batik Design Using Tapioca Starch Resist in National Symposium & Exhibition Business & Accounting 2013 at Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Pahang, Malaysia.



Norwani Md. Nawawi was born in Johor Bharu, Malaysia, in 1957. Obtained her first degree in Malaysia, at the Institute Technology MARA, in 1980 and graduated with a Master degree at the Manchester Metropolitan University (UK), in 1986. She had her PhD at the School of Textiles and Design, Heriot-Watt University, at Galashiels, Scotland, United Kingdom.

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